



CAMBRIDGE NORWICH
TECH CORRIDOR

THE TALENT TASKFORCE

The Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor held the first meeting of its' Talent Taskforce special interest group at Howes Percival's Norwich office on Thursday, June 6.

A key component of a successful economy is access to a talented workforce, something which has proved a challenge for businesses in the Tech Corridor area. The purpose of the Talent Taskforce is to bring together key businesses, support organisations and thought leaders to share challenges and discuss opportunities to work together to address the talent challenges.

Although education and skills development are crucial elements of the talent agenda, the group will focus on the challenges around talent attraction and retention and innovative ways in which we can work collaboratively to support businesses to access the right type of workforce and for talent to reach their full potential.

Meeting hosted by  **HOWES
PERCIVAL**

UTILISING EXISTING TALENT



The group discussed ways to get the most out of talented staff already based in the region, young and old.

Peter van der Horst of KLM said that competition for talent in his company's sector meant that its best recruitment strategy was through apprenticeships, targeting people who are already happy living in the region.

Howes Percival's Matthew Potter raised the question of who will train these apprentices in future. He said the ageing population means we have

a group of middle-aged people who won't be able to retire for some time due to their pensions. This population, who need and want to work, have knowledge and experience which they could pass on to the next generation of staff.

Jim Marshall of Marshall Wolfe said the fact that the region is a popular destination for retirees means there is an opportunity to access a talent pool with a wealth of skills.

He said many of these people may be keen to work part-time to supplement their other incomes. This could potentially fit well with the ageing society element of the Government's industrial strategy.

NEXT STEPS

Think about different models that could benefit the region; can we better utilise the existing, ageing work force to train apprentices?

What can we learn from existing, successful apprenticeship schemes at employers such as KLM or M&H Plastics that we can roll out to other businesses in the region?



NEW PLATFORMS

Sara Horsfall of Ginibee set the scene by explaining that research shows that “current recruitment methods are outdated”.

She said: “89 per cent of vacancies advertised as full-time, but only 13 per cent of job-seekers want full-time posts.”

Ginibee’s platform creates talent partnerships, which enable two people looking for part-time roles to partner up and apply for a full-time role, create a proposition between themselves and sell continuity to the business.

Langham Recruitment’s Andy Almond added that companies needed to respond to the fact that life cycles for jobs also getting shorter and shorter. He cited that the average job term for a software engineer in Manchester is 19 months, and added employers need to embrace this way of working.

He said talent sharing schemes work well in other parts of the country. This means if a company has a member of staff who has finished a project and now has spare capacity, they can go and work for another company who requires someone with a similar skillset. This is particularly convenient in business centres with a lot of different start-up companies, which often don’t have resources to employ huge teams on a full-time basis.

M&H Plastics’ Joe Rahman said the talent sharing model could work in his business, particularly when it comes to technical roles. But he said talent would have to be shared between non-competing firms.

Concerns were raised that it may be difficult to get employees being “shared” between different firms to buy into an individual company’s culture.

Mark Merrywest of made said modern technology means you can have a model where senior managers run the business and offer continuity, supported by a team that changes regularly, with people working remotely at co-working spaces such as the new WeWork centre setting up in Cambridge.

Peter van der Horst explained that the seasonal nature of KLM’s work meant that it had recently introduced an eight months on, four months off working pattern. Staff can apply for these specific contracts, where they work a full year’s hours in eight months. They are employed full-time, but can use the other four months to enjoy other activities, take a holiday, or work for another business.

He added that KLM had discussed talent sharing with other companies looking for engineers with similar skills, but the fact that their busy periods overlapped rendered it impractical.

“Current recruitment methods are out-dated - 89 per cent of vacancies are advertised as full-time, but only 13 per cent of job-seekers want full-time posts.”

Sarah Horsfall - Ginibee

NEXT STEPS

What are the tools we can bring in to put ourselves on the map? A region-wide talent sharing platform? Can we bring together businesses who share similar types of staff profile? Are there different ways of working we can use as examples to get other companies in the Tech Corridor to do the same?



MARKETING

The taskforce discussed challenges around marketing the region and its businesses. Jim Marshall said he feels Norwich has a lot of small companies which are attractive to the younger generation.

“They don’t want to work for big brands anymore, they want to work somewhere agile and fast-moving,” he said.

But he added that the lack of significant clusters meant many job candidates feared their options would be limited if they moved to the region.

Joe Rahman agreed, adding he felt there were no significant clusters in Norfolk or Suffolk, apart from around energy. This often leads graduates to look elsewhere for work.

Engaging Norfolk’s Cassandra Andrews said employees of all demographics are now seeking careers with a purpose. Andy Almond said that this was an area where the region could excel.

He said: “There’s a great opportunity in terms of the work going on around environmental issues, green energy and the future of mobility. This kind of work appeals to the younger generation, but we need to educate employers that they have to sell the place and the opportunity, not just ask people why they want the job at interviews.”

While several members of the group said the quality of life sell could be difficult, with many other parts of the country also positioning themselves as great places to live, it was also felt that a demographic of people who have lived in London or other big urban areas and were now looking to move out of the city to start a family could be a ‘sweet spot’ to target through marketing.

Kent Height of Tech and Beer said the links offered by Norwich and Stansted airports could be a big selling point. The fact you can be in Amsterdam from Norwich in less than an hour is a strong

selling point.

Mr Almond said more analysis was needed of how the East compares to other parts of the country in terms of house prices, number of good schools, etc. These are factors which are important to people when relocating their families.

He added: “We need to showcase what’s going on, the opportunities, and the supporting information. Not many other regions are taking this three-pronged approach.”

NEXT STEPS

When marketing the Tech Corridor, how do we explore the connection to the rest of the world via Amsterdam and London, as well as promoting the opportunities in the region for roles with a purpose that aren’t available elsewhere?

How do we encourage businesses to market themselves in a more successful manner and make them more attractive to employees? Can we run workshops? Share best practice?

ATTENDEES

Andy Almond - Langham Recruitment
Cassandra Andrews - Engaging Norfolk
David Bullock - Tigereye Consulting
Thea Goodluck - Tech Nation
Kent Height - Tech and Beer
Sara Horsfall - Ginibee
Peter van der Horst - KLM
Jim Marshall - Marshall Wolfe
Mark Merrywest - Made
Matthew Potter - Howes Percival
Joe Rahman - M&H Plastics
Tim Robinson - Tech East
Julie Schofield - University of East Anglia
Steve Scowen - Broadland District Council
Jordan Sharman - Hethel Innovation



WORKSTREAM SUMMARY

WORKSTREAM ONE: EXISTING TALENT

Objective:

Maximise employment opportunities within existing regional talent pool in the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor region.

Potential areas of focus:

- Senior tech talent: Explore ways to fully leverage the wealth of talent and experience of our existing 'later in life/pre-retirement' tech talent.
- Grow our own: Maximise opportunities for home grown tech talent, which could include apprenticeships or mentor programmes. Particular interest in utilising senior tech talent to facilitate this.

This could include:

- Opportunity Audit: Gather data to explore size of opportunity around ageing workforce
- Collate best practice examples from Tech Corridor and externally – eg KLM & M&H Plastics apprenticeships schemes
- Identify models to test and engage potential trial businesses
- Create focus group of senior tech workers and homegrown talent to pressure test different models.
- Deploy new programme – track/improve/report back

WORKSTREAM TWO: NEW PLATFORMS

Objective:

To explore different employment models that will allow us to appeal to employee work/life requirements as well as the changing needs of employers, such as seasonal spikes.

Potential areas of focus:

- Tools: Potential for new platform to collate and promote different types of employment models/contracts currently in the Tech Corridor region
- Testing of new models: Are there new ways that we can address talent as a regional collective?

This could include:

- Data audit: What do we know about the changing needs of employees and employers in the Tech Corridor with regards to talent/working models (ie types of contracts)? How does this compare by age group & sectors and can we predict trends that we may need to plan for in the future?
- Best practice examples: What platforms and initiatives exist in and outside of our region (including overseas) that we could look to adapt or scale up in the Tech Corridor region. eg Andy Almond's Manchester talent share initiative.
- Platform & tools: What tools do we currently use to attract and engage potential talent – what more should be available?

WORKSTREAM THREE: MARKETING

Objective:

Position the Tech Corridor as an attractive, rewarding place for high value employees of varying life stages to have a Tech career

Potential areas of focus:

- Tech Corridor narrative: Creating a compelling halo message for the region as a whole
- Filling existing roles: Improved marketing for individual high value tech roles at a business level

This could include:

- Creation of profiles for key employee types we are hoping to attract to the region including life stage overviews, behaviours and career decision motivators. This will enable us to develop messages and activities to match key audiences.
- Mapping Tech Corridor 'sells' to profile types including exploring new benefits such as links to Europe/Amsterdam/ROW to match motivating factors.
- Creation of best practice workshops for HR marketing material incorporating Tech Corridor wide sell.